Construction of a tunnel under Rohtang Pass

*60. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Hon'ble Prime Minister during his last visit to Manali-Lahaul in Himachal Pradesh announced the construction of a tunnel by the Defence Ministry under Rohtang Pass; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and what action has been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The Prime Minister, in his Press Statement dated 29.5.2001, at Manali had stated that the Central Government will expedite the commencement of construction work of the tunnel at Rohtang on Leh-Manali road. However, construction of the tunnel is not a Defence Project. It is essentially a development project.

The technical feasibility studies for construction of the tunnel have been completed. However, a Technical Committee appointed by Government on 25.6.2001 has advised to relocate the South Portal of the tunnel. This has been accepted by the Government. M/s. RITES are being asked to prepare the Detailed Project Report (DPR), including Environment Impact Study. The construction of tunnel will commence after the project is cleared by the Planning Commission and the investment decision has been taken by the Government.